

**History 475: European Social History, 1914 to Present**

Spring 2017, TR 4-5:15 (1217 Humanities)

Instructor: R. Koshar ([rjkoshar@wisc.edu](mailto:rjkoshar@wisc.edu)); Office Hours: 4101 Humanities (Thurs. 2-3:30)

Faculty web site: [http://history.wisc.edu/faculty\\_rk.htm](http://history.wisc.edu/faculty_rk.htm)

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**(Fernand Leger, The Card Players, 1917).**

**Course Rationale:** What happened to the individual in twentieth century European history, when politics and society became intertwined as never before? This is our central question as we explore, through the lens of social history, a time of mass warfare and genocide but also unparalleled economic growth and sweeping societal change. Many have assumed that in the twentieth century the individual perished as a result of such massive transformative events. But the evidence tells stories other than dissolution and “the death of Man.” As we pursue the individual’s paradoxical march

through the past century, we study both history writ large, and history as it is made in the smaller spaces of everyday life. In other words, we follow the insights of German philosopher Theodor Adorno, who wrote: “in an individualistic society, the general not only realizes itself through the interplay of particulars, but society is essentially the substance of the individual.”

**Goals:** The pedagogical goals of the course are: to deepen your knowledge of late modern European social history in all its drama and complexity; to build your expository and critical skills through writing and discussion; to give you familiarity with a primary source that has become ubiquitous in contemporary culture, namely “life writing” (e.g., memoir, autobiography, journal, diary); to relate this source critically to larger historical narratives and problems; and to consider how study of the past relates to present day events. **In order to further these goals, I do not allow electronic devices (laptops, smartphones, e-readers, flatscreen TVs, drones, etc.) in lecture.**

**Assignments and Grading:**

**Undergrads:** two six-page (minimum) papers (due Feb. 14 & Apr 20); a midterm (Mar. 16); a cumulative final (May 4); and discussion.

(For each paper, students are required to read and analyze an example of “life writing” from modern European history. More information and a bibliography of sources will be available).

**Honors:** all requirements listed above, except for second paper, which should be a minimum of ten pages and may include other options (see instructor).

**Graduate Students:** a seminar-length research paper (25-30 pgs.), midterm, and final.

All students are urged to familiarize themselves with guidelines concerning plagiarism. Cases of plagiarism or cheating will be dealt with severely. For university policy on academic misconduct and plagiarism: <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/students/>.

**Due dates for papers and exam dates are firm; exceptions will be considered only in cases of dire personal crisis, or the end of human history, in which instance the information contained herein is no longer applicable.**

**Discussion:** While I’ll include discussion throughout lectures, we will have seven separate lecture periods when we’ll discuss primary source reading. For these class sessions, a number of students will be designated as “lead discussants,” or panelists, and asked to comment on pre-circulated questions before the entire class has the

chance to weigh in on the reading. These discussions usually become quite lively, so be ready to critique, argue (respectfully), and enjoy. The success of each discussion is of course dependent on your attending all lectures and staying up-to-date with course readings. Your discussion grade hinges not only on the thoughtfulness and coherence of your comment as a panelist but also on your contributions to general class discussions.

**Undergraduate Grading:**

Two papers=30%

Midterm=25%

Final=25%

Discussion=20%

These are flexible percentages. In some cases, the instructor may adjust percentages, e.g., to reflect a student's progress in the course of the semester. Grade Scale: A=100-93; AB=92-88; B=87-83; BC=82-78; C=77-70; D=69-60.

**Required Reading (available for purchase and on reserve):**

Richard Vinen, *A History in Fragments* (Da Capo)

Emilie Carles, *A Life of Her Own: The Transformation of a Countrywoman in Twentieth-Century France* (Penguin)

Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire* (Penguin Classics)

Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli. The Story of a Year* (Farrar Straus Giroux)

Liana Millu, *Smoke Over Birkenau* (Northwestern)

Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City. A Diary* (Picador)

Giorgio, *Memoirs of an Italian Terrorist* (Carroll & Graf)

Slavenka Drakulić, *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism* (Penguin)

**Course Schedule:** Lecture titles and dates are approximate.

Jan 17 Course Introduction

Jan 19 Fin-de-Siècle: Economy & Society

Reading: Vinen, 1-42; start Carles

Jan 24 Fin-de-Siècle: March of the Isms

**Jan 26 Discussion of Emilie Carles**

Reading: finish Carles

Jan 31 Social Origins of World War I  
Feb 2 Storm of Steel  
Reading: Vinen, 43-60; start Barbusse

**Feb 7 Discussion of Henri Barbusse**

Feb 9 War in the Streets  
Reading: finish Barbusse

Feb 14 From Futurism to Italian Fascism

**Feb 14 First paper due**

Feb 16 Weimar Republic: A Murder Mystery?  
Reading: Vinen, 63-127

Feb 21 Nazism as a Modern "Catch-All" Party

Feb 23 Was there a "People's Community" in Nazi Germany?  
Reading: start Levi; Vinen, 128-171

**Feb 28 Discussion of Carlo Levi**

Mar 2 Were Transnationalism and Fascism Incompatible?  
Reading: finish Levi

Mar 7 World War II and Genocide

Mar 9 Communists, Christians, Nationalists: The European Resistance  
Reading: start Millu; Vinen, 172-211

**Mar 14 Discuss Liana Millu**

Reading: finish Millu  
Mar 16 **Midterm**

**Mar 17-26 Spring Recess**

Mar 28 Years of Trauma in Postwar Europe

**Mar 30 Discuss *A Woman in Berlin***

Reading: *A Woman in Berlin*; Vinen, 247-298

Apr 4 The Roots of Welfare-State Prosperity

Apr 6 The Alternative: "Real Existing Socialism"

Reading: Vinen, 298-395

Apr 11 Lennon, not Lenin: Culture and Politics

**Apr 13 Discuss Giorgio**

Reading: Giorgio; Vinen, 396-432

Apr 18 Divided Regimes of Memory

Apr 20 Collapse of Communism

**Apr 20 Second paper due**

Reading: Vinen, 433-531

Apr 25 Neo-Liberalism and its Discontents

**Apr 27 Discuss Drakulić**

Reading: Drakulić

May 2 Conclusions

**May 4 In-Class Final 4-5:15**